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Target identification system nears completion

by J. Rich Garcia, Directed Energy Directorate

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. — For U.S. forces to pinpoint a military target, eight separate military systems weighing up to 60 pounds total are needed. Air Force researchers at Kirtland Air Force Base have been able to combine these systems into a single, 10-pound piece of combat gear that is expected to be ready for production before the end of the year.

The Laser Integrated Target Identification System, developed by the Air Force Research Laboratory's Directed Energy Directorate, uses laser-based technology to identify a target's range and "paint" a laser spot on the target that will guide munitions to it. It is capable of spotting targets by day or night. Included is a geolocation system to further identify an exact location and an efficient, lightweight battery capability.

This system will be used by combat controllers from the Air Force Special Operations Command, complementing their Battlefield Air Operations kits, which were designed prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom to improve the manner in which target coordinates are relayed.

According to Maj. Jeff Salter, who heads the directorate's Tactical Laser Systems Branch, "This is a two-year project aimed at reducing the weight and size of equipment that a combatant must carry in a battlefield. The overall cost of this development effort is around \$19 million."

The next step is to transition the technology to a product center where production can begin. All of the services will be able to use the completed system. @